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13. — *A Manual of Mythology, in the Form of Question and Answer.*

By the REV. GEORGE W. COX, M. A. First American, from the Second London Edition. New York: Leypoldt and Holt. 1868. 12mo. pp. 300.

THE modern science of comparative mythology, which until lately could be studied only in ponderous treatises, like that of Grimm, or in learned monographs, like those of Bréal, is at last beginning to get expounded in a more popular form and in school-books. The works of Mr. Baring-Gould, however imperfectly put together, are nevertheless so very readable, that they must serve to diffuse far and wide many fragmentary, but important, notions of the new science. And now Mr. G. W. Cox — a most estimable writer, always scholarlike in his enthusiasm, and usually scholarlike in his conceptions — has prepared for us an elementary treatise, a sort of mythological primer, which admirably fills a place not before occupied by any respectable book whatever. With some qualifications, presently to be noted, it is comprehensive and accurate enough to satisfy the scholar who needs a compendium, while, on the other hand, it is sufficiently entertaining and intelligible to be used with profit by the young student who is for the first time approaching the subject.

Since the promulgation of philosophic and rational theories of ancient mythology, all the old-fashioned treatises on the subject, however erudite, seem as crude, and often as puerile, as the speculations of sixteenth-century physicians on the nature and causes of disease. The kind of ingenuity displayed in such works as those of Creuzer and Gladstone becomes after a while merely provoking. And even a straightforward account, like that in the first volume of Grote's "History of Greece," is excessively tedious, from the total absence of any general hypothesis which might serve to co-ordinate the bewildering details, and link them together in the memory. As for the old textbooks, they have become worse than useless. They consist usually of an uncritical mixture of Euhemerism, symbolism, and the doctrine of a primitive revelation. Or even if they keep clear of reckless theorizing, they do not succeed in investing the myths of classic antiquity with the average grace and dignity of a modern fairy-tale, or in making the student understand how so sensible a people as the ancient Greeks could have found any mental nutriment in what to us seems so stale and insipid.

Indeed, to describe ancient mythology well, upon any theory, requires a combination of somewhat rare gifts. An old myth, to interest

us who no longer regard it with awe and wonder, must be well told. A story which no longer illustrates any portion of our theory of things must rest more or less upon its merits as a mere story. Therefore the writer who attempts to popularize the science of mythology must have fair power of narration, as well as some poetic insight. He must have a keen sense of the beauty and humor of these old legends, that he may impart something of such a sense to his readers. And he must also have acquired enough of the true scientific spirit to know how to generalize boldly and exhaustively, whenever generalization will throw steady light upon the subject, and how to abstain from that too eager theorizing which is sure to invest any novel treatise with a suspicious and untrustworthy air.

It is because its author possesses to a certain extent these qualifications, but particularly the first mentioned, that Mr. Cox's "*Manual of Mythology*" is, on the whole, such a satisfactory text-book. The theory upon which it proceeds is, of course, the theory, more or less thoroughly conceived by Müller and Bréal, that a myth is the offspring of a primitive explanation of some conspicuous natural phenomenon. "Not an allegory," as we have elsewhere observed, "not an esoteric symbol, but an explanation. Where we propound a scientific theory, primitive men constructed a myth. For a thing is said to be explained, when it is classified with other things with which we are already acquainted. That is the only kind of explanation of which science is capable. We explain the origin, progress, and ending of a thunder-storm, when we have classified the phenomena presented by it along with other more familiar phenomena of vaporization and condensation. But the primitive man explained, to his own satisfaction, the same thing, when he had classified it along with the well-known phenomena of human volition, by constructing a theory of a great black dragon pierced by the unerring arrows of a heavenly archer." This was the most obvious and most satisfactory explanation which he could give. A myth, then, is a fragment of fetichistic philosophy, or of fetichistic poetry,—it matters not which we call it, for in the myth-making age poetry and philosophy were one. Max Müller's well-known theory, therefore, though mainly correct in its details, seems to us wholly fallacious in its general expression. The existence of mythology is not due to any "disease," abnormality, or hypertrophy of metaphor, in language. It was not so much the character of the expression which originated the thought, as it was the thought which gave character to the expression. The early Aryan language abounded in metaphor, because the early Aryans were myth-makers. And they were myth-makers because they had nothing but

the phenomena of human will and effort with which to compare objective phenomena. Therefore it was that they spoke of the sun as an archer, and classified inanimate no less than animate objects as masculine and feminine. Max Müller's statement of his own theory is but one illustration among many of the curious way in which he combines a marvellous penetration into the significance of details with a singular looseness of general conceptions.

There is no evidence in the volume before us that Mr. Cox has gone any deeper than his master into the philosophy of this subject. Indeed, as is perhaps well enough in such an elementary treatise, he philosophizes but little. He does not strive to explain ultimately why the Greeks called the dawn a forsaken maiden: it is enough for his present purpose to know that they did so call it. Let us, as a specimen of Mr. Cox's mode of treatment, expound after his fashion the story of *Cædipus*.

Cædipus was the great national hero of the Thebans. His father, *Laïos*, had been warned by the Delphic oracle that he was in danger of death from his own son. The newly born *Cædipus* was therefore exposed on the hillside; but, like *Romulus* and *Remus*, and all infants similarly situated in legend, was duly rescued. He was taken to *Corinth*, where he grew up. Journeying once to *Thebes*, he got into a quarrel with an old man whom he met on the road, and slew him, who was none other than his father, *Laïos*. Reaching *Thebes*, he found the city harassed by the *Sphinx*, who afflicted the land with drought until she should receive an answer to her riddles. *Cædipus* destroyed the monster by solving her dark sayings, and as a reward received in marriage his own mother, *Iocaste*. Then the *Erinyes* hastened the discovery of these dark deeds; *Iocaste* died in her bridal chamber; and *Cædipus*, having blinded himself, fled to the grove of the *Eumenides*, near *Athens*, where, amid flashing lightning and peals of thunder, he died.

Cædipus is the Sun. Like *Herakles*, *Perseus*, *Theseus*, *Bellerophon*, *Sigurd*, *William Tell*, he performs his marvellous deeds at the behest of others. In the evening he is united to the Dawn, the mother from whom he had sprung in the morning; and here the original story doubtless ended. In the Vedic hymns we find *Indra*, the Sun, born of *Dahana* (*Daphne*), the Dawn, whom he afterwards, in the evening twilight, marries. To the Indian mind the story was here complete. But the Greeks had outgrown and forgotten the primitive significance of the myth. To them *Cædipus* and *Iocaste* were human, or at least anthropomorphic beings; and a marriage between them was a fearful crime, which called for bitter expiation. Thus the latter part of the story

arose in the effort to satisfy a moral feeling. Like Iole and Iamos, the word "Iocaste" signifies the delicate violet tints of the morning clouds. Laios (Skr. Dasyu) denotes the dark night, which begets the sun and is slain by it. Œdipus was exposed, like Paris upon Ida (a Vedic word, meaning "the earth"), because the sunlight in the morning lies upon the hillside. He is borne on to the destruction of his father and the incestuous marriage with his mother by an irresistible Moira or Fate. The sun cannot but slay the darkness and hasten to the couch of the violet twilight. The Sphinx is the storm-spirit who imprisons the rain, and utters dark mutterings and rumblings which none but the all-knowing sun may understand. Her name denotes "one who binds" (from *sphingo*), and she answers to Echidna or Ahi, the throttling snake of darkness. The idea was not derived from Egypt, but the Greeks, on finding Egyptian figures resembling their conception of the Sphinx, called them by the same name. Œdipus destroys her, as Indra slays Vritra, and brings down rain upon the parched earth. Of the same family with the Sphinx are the monsters Python, Typhon, Polyphemus, and Fafnir. Œdipus dies in the sacred grove of the Erinyes, a word which did not originally mean *Fury*, and cannot be explained in Greek. It is identical with the Sanskrit Saranyu, the name for morning. As the light of morning reveals the evil deeds done under the cover of night, the lovely Dawn, or Erinyes, came to be regarded under one aspect as the terrible detector and avenger of iniquity. So the grove of the Erinyes, like the garden of the Hyperboreans, represents "the fairy network of clouds, which are the first to receive and the last to lose the light of the sun in the morning and in the evening. Hence, although Œdipus dies in a thunder-storm, yet the Eumenides are kind to him, and his last hour is one of deep peace and tranquillity." To the last remains with him his daughter Antigone, "she who is born opposite," the pale light which springs up opposite to the setting sun.

To many persons it no doubt seems incredible that so many and such varied stories, so full of human interest, should have arisen merely from anthropomorphic explanations of physical phenomena. And when we recollect that not only Greek mythology, but the myths, fairy tales, and folk-lore of all nations under heaven, ancient or modern, are to be explained on the same general theory, the demand upon our powers of belief may appear excessive. The difficulty is only apparent, however, and in face of the evidence, amounting to an overwhelming demonstration, which is to be derived from a close analysis of the Vedic terminology, it disappears entirely. In fact, the types upon which stories are constructed are wonderfully few. Some clever playwright — we believe it was Scribe — has said that there are only seven possible dra-

matic situations: that is, all the plays in the world may be classed with some one of seven archetypal dramas. If this be true, the astonishing complexity of mythology taken in the concrete, as compared with its extreme simplicity when analyzed, need no longer surprise us. Nothing better than mythology illustrates the aphorism that there is nothing new under the sun. Hans Andersen writes a lovely story of "The Ice Maiden," which turns out to be an Old-World myth of the seasons. The wild and thrilling romance, "*La Maison Forestière*," by Erckmann-Chatrian, is the story of the Wild Huntsman, the Erlking, the Piper of Hamelin, Orpheus, Gunadhyas, and Odin, — an original storm-myth, colored with reminiscences of the Berserker madness. Take almost any household tale or local superstition whatever, and in the attempt to trace exhaustively its kinship, you are almost inevitably carried over the entire habitable surface of our planet. We find Reynard the Fox playing his pranks in South Africa, and Jack planting his beanstalk among the wigwams of the American Indians. Odysseus and Kalypso reappear in Arabia as Ahmed and Paribanou, and in Germany as Tannhäuser and Ursula; while the same myth supplied Tasso with the conception of the gardens of Armida. Let us consider a single physical experience, — that of the quiescence of Nature during the winter months. To say nothing of the legends of Demeter and Persephone, Adonis, Eurydike, Balder, and Siegfried, we have the stories of the Sleeping Beauty, Endymion, the three Tells of Rütli, Thomas of Erceldoune, Olger Dansk, Charlemagne, Frederic Barbarossa, Olaf Redbeard, Don Sebastian, St. John, Merlin, Epimenides, Rip Van Winkle, and the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, — all suggested ultimately by this single physical phenomenon. And the list might be extended to a much greater length. The above is enough to show that a story-radical may be as prolific of heterogeneous offspring as a word-radical. Just as we find the root *spac*, "to look," begetting words so various as *sceptic*, *bishop*, *speculate*, *conspicuous*, *species*, *spice*, etc., we may also expect to find a simple representation of the diurnal course of the sun, like those lyrically given in the Veda, branching off into stories as diversified as those of Œdipus, Herakles, Odysseus, Odin, and Sigurd. In his interesting appendix to Henderson's "*Folklore of the Northern Counties of England*," Mr. Baring-Gould has made a most ingenious and praiseworthy attempt to reduce the entire existing mass of household legends to about fifty story-roots; and his list, though both redundant and defective, is nevertheless, as an empirical classification, very instructive.

It would have been well, if Mr. Cox had occasionally contented himself with this humbler task of grouping and affiliating ancient myths

according to their general characteristics, instead of invariably striving to explain, sometimes by doubtful etymologies, the minute features of each tale that he has taken up. Such myths as he cannot treat in this conclusive way he is apt to pass by, as if they were of small account. His treatment of Dionysos, for example, is inexcusably meagre. In the study of mythology, half a loaf is better than no bread. It is very instructive to compare analogous conceptions, even where, as in the Gellert-myth, we cannot decipher the mode of their origination.

Perhaps it is hardly fair to complain of Mr. Cox for not understanding the general philosophical bearings of the science of mythology better than Max Müller himself understands them. It is certain that both the one and the other sin against the canons of a sound inductive philosophy, when they interpret Zeus or Jupiter as originally the supreme Aryan God, and implicitly regard Greek polytheism as one of the degraded remnants of a primeval monotheism. Philology itself teaches us that this could not have been so. Father Dyaus was originally the bright sky, and nothing more. Although his name became generalized, in the classic languages, into *deus*, *θεός*, a god, it is quite certain that in early days, before the Aryan separation, it had acquired no such exalted significance. It was only in Greece and Rome — or, we may say, among the still united Italo-Hellenic tribes — that Jupiter-Zeus attained a pre-eminence over all other deities. The people of Iran quite rejected him, the Teutons preferred Thor and Odin, and even in India there is no evidence that Dyaus took permanent precedence of Indra. It is in fact quite useless to look for a supreme Aryan divinity. There was no sense, active or dormant, of monotheism in the primitive Aryan intelligence. All mythology goes to show that the earliest religion was pure fetichism, and upon any other supposition the current interpretations of myths become quite futile.

As for Mr. Cox's general method of interpretation, we doubt if it can be considered wholly adequate to account for the heroic myths, and especially for the late and complicated legend of the Trojan War. That Zeus, Apollo, and Herakles were solar deities, and nothing more, can hardly be questioned. But that Achilleus and Agamemnon were solar deities, and nothing more, is by no means so probable. The Greeks themselves had a decided, though not very clear, sense of the distinction between the two orders of beings. We do not ignore the fact that the essential features of the Iliad-myth are to be found in the Veda, where Paris is represented, in name and in conception, by the dark robber Panis, Helen by the dawn-goddess Sarama, and so on, — and that the myth must therefore have been current long before the Greeks inhab-

ited Greece, long before there was any Ilium to be conquered. But all this does not forbid the supposition, that the legend, as we have it, may have been formed by the crystallization of mythical conceptions about a nucleus of genuine tradition. In maintaining this we are not opening the door to Euhemerism. It is very true that no trustworthy history can be obtained from the Iliad merely by sifting out the mythical element in it. But to admit this is one thing: to hold that the poem contains no reminiscence whatever of an actual event, that it is all myth and not at all tradition, is to take another and far less tenable position. In this view we are upheld by a most sagacious and accurate scholar, Mr. E. A. Freeman, who finds in Carlovingian romance an excellent illustration of the problem before us.

The Charlemagne of romance is a mythical personage. He is supposed to have been a Frenchman, at a time when neither the French nation nor the French language can properly be said to have existed; and he is represented as a doughty Crusader, although crusading was not thought of until long after the Carlovingian era. The legendary deeds of Charlemagne are not conformed to the ordinary rules of geography and chronology. He is a myth, and, what is more, he is a solar myth, — an *avatar*, or at least a representative, of Odin. If in his case legend were not controlled and rectified by history, he would be as unreal as Agamemnon.

History, however, tells us that there was an Emperor Karl, German in race, name, and language, who was one of the two or three greatest men of action that the world has ever seen, and who in the ninth century ruled over all Western Europe. To the historic Karl corresponds in many particulars the mythical Charlemagne. The legend has preserved the fact, which without the information supplied by history we might perhaps set down as a fiction, that there was a time when Germany, Gaul, Italy, and part of Spain formed a single empire. And, as Mr. Freeman has well observed, the mythical crusades of Charlemagne are good evidence that there were crusades, although the real Karl liked Saracens well enough — at a distance.

Now the case of Agamemnon may be much like that of Charlemagne, except that we no longer have history to help us in rectifying the legend. The Iliad preserves the tradition of a time when a large portion of the islands and mainland of Greece were at least partially subject to a common suzerain; and, as Mr. Freeman has again shrewdly suggested, the assignment of a place like Mykenæ, instead of Athens or Sparta, as the seat of the suzerainty, is strong evidence of the trustworthiness of the tradition. It appears to show that the legend was constrained by some remembered fact, instead of being guided by

general probability. Charlemagne's seat of government has been transferred in romance from Aachen to Paris: had it really been at Paris, says Mr. Freeman, no one would have thought of transferring it to Aachen. Moreover, the story of Agamemnon, though uncontrolled by historic records, is, here at least, supported by archæology, which shows Mykenæ to have been at some time or other a place of great consequence.

Then, as to the Trojan War, we know that the Greeks several times crossed the Ægean, and colonized a large part of the sea-coast of Asia Minor. In order to do this it was necessary to oust from their homes many warlike communities of Lydians and Bithynians, and we may be sure that this was not done without prolonged fighting. There must have been now and then a levy *en masse* in prehistoric Greece, as there was in mediæval Europe; and whether the great suzerain at Mykenæ ever attended one or not, legend would be sure to send him on such an expedition, as it afterwards sent Charlemagne on a crusade.

We are therefore far from believing that the tale of the Trojan War is pure mythology. Though there is nothing in it which can by any cunning be construed into history, there is certainly much in it which is not due to any explanation of physical phenomena. While it cannot be denied that Paris and Helen are nothing but Night and Morning, it is, on the other hand, quite probable that Agamemnon and Achilles represent dimly remembered heroes, or sovereigns, with their characters and actions distorted to suit the exigencies of a narrative founded upon a solar myth. The character of the Nibelungenlied here well illustrates that of the Iliad. Siegfried and Brunhild, Hagen and Günther, are mere personifications of physical phenomena; but Etzel and Dietrich are none other than Attila and Theodoric surrounded with mythical attributes; and even the conception of Brunhild is supposed by some critics to contain elements derived from the traditional recollection of the historical Brunehaut. When, therefore, Achilles is said, like a true sun-god, to have died by a wound from a sharp instrument in the only vulnerable part of his body, we reply, that the legendary Charlemagne conducts himself in many respects like a solar deity. If Odysseus detained by Kalypso represents the sun ensnared and held captive by the pale goddess of night, the legend of Frederic Barbarossa asleep in a Thuringian mountain embodies a portion of a kindred conception. We know that Charlemagne and Frederic have been substituted for Odin; we may suspect that Achilles and Odysseus have been substituted for Herakles, or some other more ancient impersonation of the god of day.

We should therefore hesitate to put all myths on a level with each

other. We should stop and reflect, before trying to analyze them all into the same elements. We should remember that in early times the solar myth was a sort of type after which all wonderful stories would be likely to be patterned, and that to such a type tradition also would be made to conform. These are considerations which Mr. Cox has not kept with sufficient constancy in his mind. If he had kept them in mind, his excellent little book would have been almost above criticism.

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- 14.—*The Book of Were-Wolves: being an Account of a Terrible Superstition.* By SABINE BARING-GOULD, M. A. London: Smith, Elder, & Co. 1865. Crown 8vo. pp. 266.

WITHOUT entering upon the difficult question, whether it is ever too late to discharge one's duty to a good book by writing a notice of it, we would call attention to this little volume by Mr. Baring-Gould as one eminently worthy, from every point of view, of being reprinted in this country.

"The Book of Were-Wolves" is a good book in the sense in which all Mr. Baring-Gould's productions are "good": that is, it is entertaining, it is accurate as far as it goes, and it contains an account of things which are worth knowing, though they are in reality but little known and little written about. More than this we can hardly say of any of these books. They are not scholarly in the high sense of the word; they are neither thorough, systematic, nor always philosophical. In reading the "Curious Myths" one is shocked at the outset by the ridiculous surmise that the notion of the Wandering Jew may after all have a foundation in literal fact, because of Christ's prophecy that some who were then on earth should stay to see his second coming! Farther on in the same volume one's scholarly sense is outraged by the author's explicit approval of a clever, but silly, squib of a French abbé, in which Napoleon is identified with Apollo, and minutely delineated as a solar hero. The prelate of course intends to ridicule the great school of mythology of which his countryman Bréal is one of the founders. His brochure is similar in spirit to the "Historic Doubts" of the late Dr. Whately, and in point of ingenious puerility is about on a par with it. The perverse etymology which derives the name Napoleon from *naí* + *Apoleo* (a very Apollo!!) is worthy of Ménage; and that Mr. Baring-Gould could even be very deeply amused by it shows that he has never acquired a firm grasp of his subject. He boldly explains Thornrose and Melusina, nay, even Schamir, as physical myths; but when he comes to William Tell, he is dimly afraid of